



CITY OF GAHANNA

Creekside brings new life to Olde Gahanna A Model Urban Village in the Heart of Suburbia



In recent years, many American suburbs have begun to understand the need for a community focal point and charming mixed-use neighborhoods that add character to their communities. The City of Gahanna has been fortunate to be able to pursue both of these goals simultaneously since the early 1990s. The picture at the bottom of the page reveals the close relationship between Creekside Park (opened in 1999) and the original 19th century Village of Gahanna—the Olde Gahanna neighborhood.

Today, the park's many gathering spaces and the neighborhood's revitalization projects are becoming popular destination points for Gahanna's citizens as well as all Central Ohioans. The story of this success reveals how the following elements have revitalized the formerly polluted creek and deteriorating neighborhood: *high-quality urban design that incorporates a natural waterway into the life of the neighborhood; extensive citizen and community leader involvement and input in the process; and, governmental commitment and creativity to long-range neighborhood planning.*



Creekside Park: Rediscovering the Natural Beauty of the City's Roots

The City of Gahanna owes its existence to the waters of the Big Walnut Creek. The original village was founded along its edge in the mid-19th century, and an old grain mill in the creek was essential for the village's early economic success.



Through a collaborative effort with the citizens of Gahanna and consultants instrumental in San Antonio, Texas's Riverwalk Plan, City leaders led the effort to clean up the Big Walnut and create unique passive recreation spaces. The project has not only added beautiful public spaces to our city, it has attracted the many revitalization projects completed and underway in neighboring Olde Gahanna. While today's Gahanna may not rely on the Big Walnut to power its businesses, the City has definitely re-established a connection to the creek. Today, it continues to "power" a sense of community and economic development as businesses are learning the value of locating next to such a great natural amenity.

The completion of Creekside Park is known as Phase One of the City's broader vision of Olde Gahanna revitalization. The Park was a \$1.2 million project, which included a \$250,000 Nature Works grant from the Franklin County Greenways Initiative. The grant money was used to improve the quality of the creek and restore it to its natural meander. Building the primary feature of the park—the waterfall pictured above—and the Creekwalk that runs from the northern tip of Creekside Island to the southern edge of Olde Gahanna were the other components of Phase One. Large limestone boulders were used to create natural seating near the waterfall and along the Creekwalk in a series of "Council Rings," meant to resemble the Indian tribal council meetings that once took place in the area. The waterfall scene below is from the annual Creekside Festival, begun in 1999 which has evolved into a major, three day event attracting over 40,000 people.



One of five Council Rings along the Creekwalk



Festival-goers enjoying the focal point of the park

A design philosophy of connectivity between Creekside Park and Olde Gahanna guided Phase One and is responsible for the current success of the park and neighborhood. These photos reveal how pedestrians can easily travel from Mill Street and even the heavily traveled Route 62 to Creekside Park. The park has just the right balance of accessibility and exclusivity that invites a stroll down to creek-level to explore the wonderful scenes along the Creekwalk.



Pedestrians are safely separated from Route 62 traffic but can easily follow the path to Olde Gahanna businesses, shown in the distance.

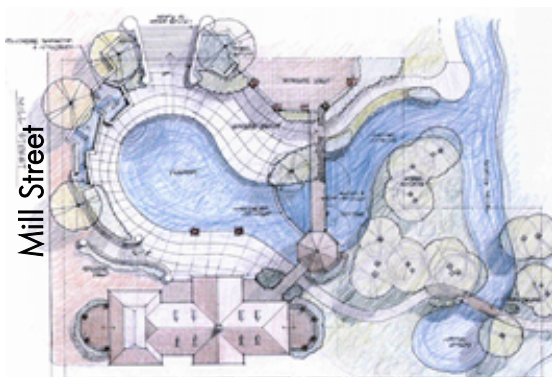


Steps leading from the Creekwalk to the Route 62 Bridge in the shadow of the Gateway Arch entrance to Olde Gahanna



Pedestrian walkway along Route 62 Bridge

In addition to these great connections to the Mill Street/Route 62 intersection area, the City is planning for Creekside Phase II—a project that will redirect the Big Walnut toward Mill Street and create a lagoon and plaza area adjacent to Mill Street. Phase II will occur north of the Mill Street/Route 62 intersection and will complete the vision of Creekside Park as the highlight of Olde Gahanna.



Olde Gahanna Redevelopment: Continuing the Vision

Recent redevelopment projects by local businesses and developers are indicative of the fact that the private sector understands and is continuing this design philosophy that has evolved over the past decade. A significant Olde Gahanna project, completed in 2003, was undertaken by the local development-architecture team of Brookewood Construction and George Parker & Associates. Both companies have offices in Olde Gahanna. In an era when it is becoming increasingly difficult for local entrepreneurs to guide redevelopment initiatives, the City is very proud that these local businessmen have joined in the exciting transformation of Olde Gahanna. The project is located at the northwest corner of Mill Street/Route 62 and includes a new Old Bag of Nails Restaurant and a new Colonial house that replicates the historic Summerfield house, built near the middle of the 19th century.



Summerfield House—razed in 2002.



Construction nearly complete in June 2003

The Mill House and the Old Bag of Nails Restaurant offer great visual and pedestrian connections to the Creekwalk (June 2003 view - construction/landscaping not completed):



Other Pedestrian-Oriented and Redevelopment Projects Since the Opening of Creekside Park:



Signature's Bar and Grill added a front patio to make for a more inviting entrance... creating a more pedestrian friendly environment on Mill Street.



Sky Box Bar and Grill Located in this building and also added a front patio. This creates a more urban scene out of a suburban scale building.



Brookewood Construction refurbished these historic houses in 2002. The house to the left is home to the new Gahanna Convention & Visitors Bureau, formed in 2001. A new small business called "A List of Wishes" moved into the house on the right in 2002 to sell gifts and pastries. It also serves as a studio for artisans to teach classes and conduct work.

Completing the Founder's Corners: Mill Street/Route 62 Intersection:



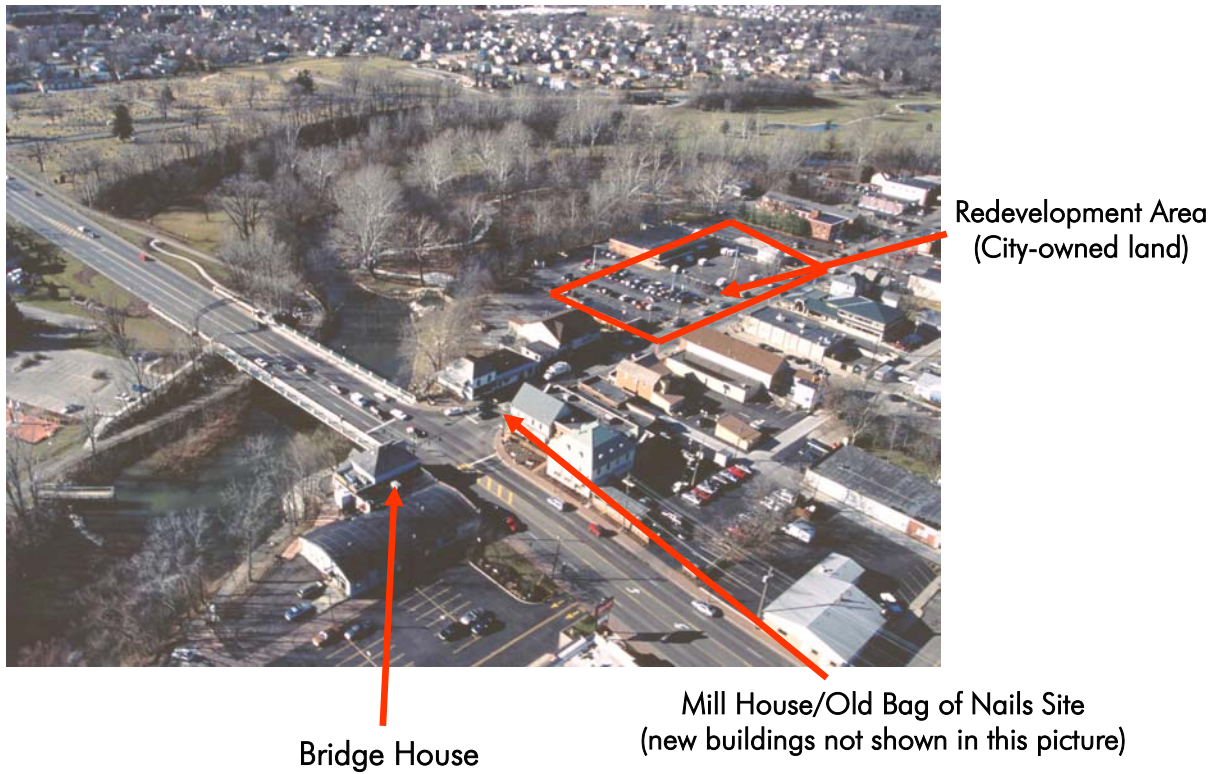
In 2002 Creekside Grill opened in one of Olde Gahanna's most picturesque buildings—the Bridge House - which offers wonderful Creekside views for patio diners.



Founder's Plaza, a great local achievement constructed in 1999, is home to several businesses and a Panera Bread restaurant. It is one building with multiple facades to emulate a smaller town scale.

A New Era for the Heart of Mill Street

In 2003 the City issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for redevelopment of a large tract of City-owned land approximately in the center of Mill Street's north-south span. The RFP required that the developer continue the practice of linkages to Creekside, along the lines of the Mill House/Old Bag of Nails project. A primary challenge for the developer is to accommodate vehicles with ample parking without detracting from the evolving urban and pedestrian atmosphere in the area. The City also emphasized its desire for true mixed-use development, with all uses taking advantage of Creekside views.



The City Chooses Its Preferred Developer: The Stonehenge Co.

In 2003, the Stonehenge Company (developer) partnered with the planning firm of Bird Houk Collaborative to answer the City's call for Olde Gahanna's future mixed-use project. The development team proposed a multi-story development with first-floor retail facing Mill Street and Creekside Park. Upper levels will contain office space and 1200-2000 square foot luxury condominiums. Most impressive is the proposal to "hide" the parking areas in an underground garage and in the interior of the wraparound building concept shown in the pictures on the following page. 464 garage spaces and 61 surface spaces were proposed. As for building space, the proposal suggests 54,600 square feet of retail, 45,000 square feet of office, and 50,200 square feet of residential. While the City expressed in 2003 its initial commitment to the broad concept, project details are currently subject to a negotiating process led by the Development Department and the Community Improvement Corporation (CIC).



Proposed Building Facades Facing Mill Street



Proposed Site Layout—The Developer has chosen to incorporate Creekside Phase II as the heart of the project. Mill Street would not only gain a lively streetscape, but also would be beautifully and directly connected into Creekside Park.



Rendering of Future Buildings' Enhancement of the Phase II Plaza Area (not to scale)

In addition to the high-quality proposed design and architecture, the City chose the Stonehenge proposal because of its ability to incorporate unique shopping and eating tourist attractions into a vital neighborhood that the City is committed to sustaining into the future. By including residential and office units, the project has the potential to become an area that is much more than a weekend destination spot. Mill Street can truly become an area where people live, work, and play.

An important issue is the continued viability of the rest of Olde Gahanna. In places like San Antonio, water focused development turns its back to the surrounding neighborhood. The City's emphasis on visual and pedestrian connections into Creekside Park should avoid this redevelopment problem. The project should spur redevelopment throughout the neighborhood, not just along the Creek. While the Stonehenge Co. project will be an exceptional town planning accomplishment, its human-scale and environmental elements will allow it to merge seamlessly into an overall Olde Gahanna redevelopment scheme.

New Roots in Olde Gahanna

Olde Gahanna has several examples of professionals and residents that have moved into the area in recent years that have shown a commitment to the neighborhood's prosperity. Since the opening of Creekside Park, the City has been impressed with the number of housing improvement projects. Successful professionals have also shown their appreciation of Olde Gahanna's charm by expanding or locating in properties in the eastern section of Olde Gahanna, several blocks removed from the Mill Street Corridor. In particular, the firms of George Parker & Associates, EMH&T, and Brookewood Construction—all of which have been instrumental in several Olde Gahanna revitalization projects—are located in Olde Gahanna and have a vested interest in the area's continued prosperity.



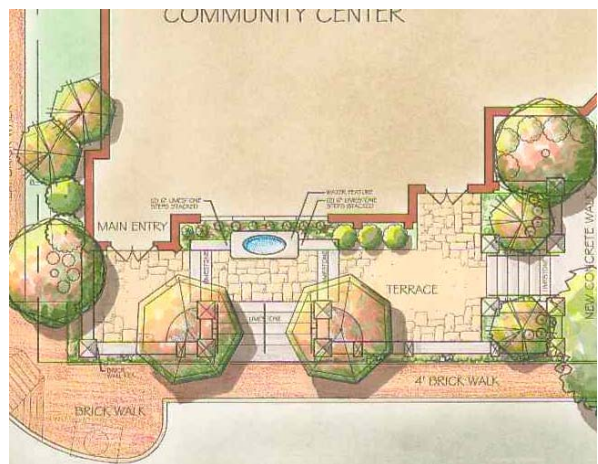
In 1976 George Parker & Associates architecture and planning firm remodeled and moved its offices into this historic old school building on Short St.



On a great street with plenty of on-street parking, EMH&T (an Engineering and Surveying company) built these office buildings on High St. in 1999. The company owns several other buildings in Olde Gahanna.



Even owners of very old buildings, such as the Sanctuary (a former church that now functions as a reception hall), are showing a renewed interest in Olde Gahanna. In 2002, the Sanctuary submitted plans to construct a beautiful landscaped terrace area at the southeast corner of High and Town Streets.





One of Olde Gahanna's most unique success stories is the 2002 refurbishment of a house on High St. The owner of a travel agency now operates his business and lives in the house. This type of development activity is the ideal type to be attracted to a traditional neighborhood that acts as the anchor to a historical suburban downtown. Rarely does suburban zoning allow for such live-work units. Accommodating this lifestyle in Olde Gahanna is a goal of the City. Live-work structures, which is exemplified by Stonehenge's proposal for condominiums above shops, will add vitality to the area and reduce vehicular traffic into and out of the neighborhood.

In short, Olde Gahanna is continually being revitalized into a fully-functioning traditional neighborhood along the lines of pre-World War II style development. City leaders are working to ensure that proper regulatory tools and appropriate types of development encourage Olde Gahanna to grow more attractive and more livable. This is long-range neighborhood planning, and it can become very complex, especially for suburban officials unaccustomed to planning for mixed-use neighborhoods. Nevertheless, the City of Gahanna's elected and administrative leaders have become excellent stewards of Olde Gahanna and Creekside Park. The story of how the City has attained this level of competence reflects the importance of citizen involvement in the planning process. Citizen input has been instrumental in guiding the City to appropriate neighborhood planning.

A Short History of the Revitalization Process

After receiving the Nature Works grant to help clean up the Big Walnut Creek, the City revealed very ambitious redevelopment plans that received strong opposition from the citizens. As this rendering indicates, early Creekside designs would have taken a large amount of Olde Gahanna real estate - involving excessive business relocation and historic character destruction..



City planners realized that a community-wide effort would be necessary if a creek redevelopment project would succeed without community opposition. Twelve public forums were initiated and convened by the City and structured in such a way that truly opened the door for cooperation and consensus building, resulting in what is now Creekside. Olde Gahanna businesses and residents became very interested participants in this process. For the first time since its suburban boom, the City began to engage in true neighborhood planning. The beauty of the Creekside Park project is that its more appropriate, smaller scale has created a more efficient, economic redevelopment tool to encourage diverse, private reinvestment in the whole area. This is a testament to the importance of citizen interaction with elected and administrative leaders.

In the late 1990s, the City used the Creekside Phase One experience as a springboard for more long-range neighborhood planning efforts. The Olde Gahanna Community Partnership (OGCP) was formed to foster better communication between Olde Gahanna businesses and residents and to provide the neighborhood more open communication with the City. The OGCP has become very involved in the annual planning of the annual three-day Creekside Blues and Jazz Fest, a regional festival held throughout Creekside and Olde Gahanna. Today, the City's Development Department works extensively with OGCP on a host of Olde Gahanna issues. The City has moved away from simple project planning towards comprehensive neighborhood planning.

Downtown Zoning

A notable 1998 neighborhood planning success was the rezoning of the Olde Gahanna zoning district. Previously zoned entirely for mixed-use, citizen participation in the rezoning process revealed to City leaders that a greater degree of neighborhood security was desired. Many owners of single-family homes in the neighborhood's northeast area explained that single-family zoning in their section would ensure that the neighborhood would remain a strong residential attraction. This allows Olde Gahanna mixed-use development to focus on Mill, High, Town, and Granville Streets and creates a buffer to the single-family neighborhoods on the periphery of the district.

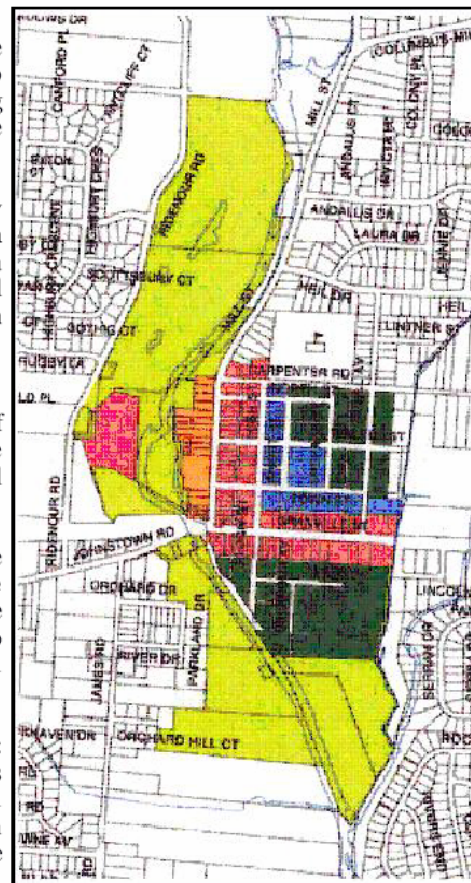
OG-1 Downtown Single Family Residential: The purpose of this zoning area is to recognize the special need for preserving single family housing at the heart of Olde Gahanna.

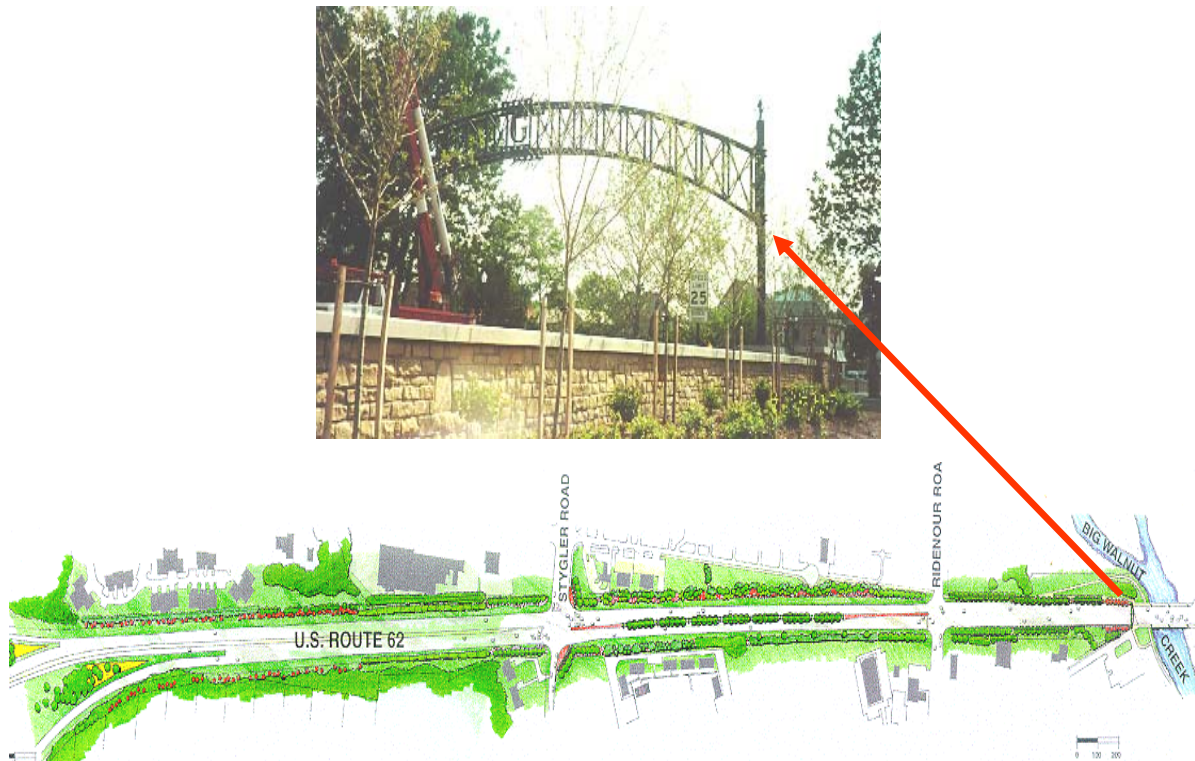
OG-2 Downtown Multi-family Residential & Suburban Office: The purpose of this zoning area is to recognize the special need for mixed use areas in creating and maintaining a vibrant Olde Gahanna.

OG-3 Downtown General Commercial: The purpose of this district is to reinforce the unique characteristics, history, existing and potential uses of original Gahanna.

OG-4 Downtown Creekside: The purpose of the Creekside Downtown area is to recognize the unique role and potential of this area to serve as the historical, cultural, and economic heart of Olde Gahanna.

OG-5 Downtown Recreational: The purpose of this district is to preserve the natural amenities around the Big Walnut Creek and to maintain green spaces for both active and passive recreational activities.





The pictures above depict the most important infrastructure project that the City engaged in at approximately the same time as the implementation of Creekside Phase One. Known as the West Gahanna Gateway Plan, the purpose of this roadway planning project was to add traffic calming devices to Route 62, a key entryway into the city. Instead of a high-speed arterial that quickly moves travelers through Olde Gahanna, the addition of a landscaped median and an archway over the bridge encourages drivers to slow down and take notice of the special neighborhood that they are entering. There is also extensive landscaping over this half-mile transition from highway to historic area.



Another project objective was to improve the pedestrian walkways along the bridge. These walkways provide pedestrian linkages between Olde Gahanna and West Gahanna neighborhoods. The City invested \$1,875,000 in the implementation of the Gateway Plan.

The City has invested in several other infrastructure projects throughout the neighborhood, such as Mill, High and Granville streetscape improvements. In sum, the City has invested over \$17 million dollars in Olde Gahanna/Creekside planning efforts:

- \$200,000 Public Parking Investments.
- \$9,375,000 Street Improvements, such as Mill, Granville, and Route 62 projects.
- \$4,060,000 Park Improvements, including Creekside Phase I and Phase II planning.
- \$3,185,000 Property Acquisition, including the Stonehenge Proposal area and Mill House/Old Bag of Nails site.
- \$490,000 Consulting Services for Creekside Phases I and II.

This multi-faceted financial investment in the area established the foundation for the many revitalization projects that have been described in these pages. In addition, the Development Department's *Olde Gahanna Design Guidelines* were passed by Council in 2002 and now guide all commercial construction and revitalization with renewed sensitivity to pedestrian, small business, and mixed-use oriented redevelopment.

Planning an urban village in a modern suburb is not an easy task. Developers have become very accustomed to large sites that are not available in a more dense mixed-use neighborhood. By forging relationships with local developers and citizens alike, the City and its Development Department has taken on the mindset of a proactive facilitator of well-planned growth in Olde Gahanna. Since the early 1990s, the heart of Gahanna has witnessed excellent governmental stewardship of natural resources and a neighborhood worthy of preservation. The future of Olde Gahanna and Creekside Park looks promising. Gahanna's citizens now have an image of a unique place in mind when they think of their hometown. This is an important qualitative measure of all great cities, and with the planning process that is now in place, Gahanna will continue to meet this standard.

For more information, or to add comments or suggestions regarding Olde Gahanna and Creekside Park, please contact the City's Development Department at:

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